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ABSTRACT

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, under the direction of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, agreed to implement a professional development policy tailored to the needs of 19 participating principals their and respective urban schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Following an intensive job shadowing program during the 1997-98 school year, each principal was asked to identify one administrative or leadership practice that would serve as a target for reflective thinking and positive change during the 1998-99 academic year. Working closely with a consulting coach assigned to the project, the principals were guided through a multi-step, reflective practice model designed to being about reform at their individual school sites. This article reports on the implementation of the reflective practice program. The study demonstrated the value of shadowing encounters and reflective practice exercises as tools to facilitate technical, interpretive, and critical levels of reflection among the principals. Principals unanimously attested to the benefits of reflective practice. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/SM)

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AN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR URBAN PRINCIPALS: REFLECTIVE THINKING *INTO* PRACTICE

A paper prepared for the

National Association of Secondary School Principals (Winter, 2000)

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ABSTRACT

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation under the direction of the National Association of Secondary School Principals agreed to implement a professional development policy tailored to the specific needs of 19 participating principals and respective schools in the Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY). Following an intensive job shadowing program during the 1997-1998 school year, each principal was asked to identify one administrative or leadership practice that would serve as a "target" for reflective thinking and positive change during the 1998-1999 academic year. Working closely with a consulting coach assigned to the project, the principals were guided through a multi-step, reflective practice model designed to bring about reform at the individual school site under the direction of the respective principals. This article reports on the implementation of the reflective practice program. The methods employed were qualitative and included in-depth interviews, structured shadowing encounters, reflective conversations between the principal and their coach, and document analyses.

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AN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR URBAN PRINCIPALS: REFLECTIVE THINKING *INTO* PRACTICE

> By far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection -- reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, and acting (Mezirow, 1990; p. 13)

OVERVIEW

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (the Foundation) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) engaged middle level principals in a professional development program based on Schon's (1983; 1987) reflective practice. Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) was selected by the Foundation based on its noteworthy efforts in standards-based reform throughout the 1990s under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA).

Understanding the uniqueness of each school, the Foundation/NASSP agreed to design professional development policies tailored to the specific needs of each of the 19 participating principals. Following an intensive job shadowing program during the 1997-1998 school year, each principal was asked to identify one administrative or leadership practice that would serve as a "target" for reflective thinking and positive change during the 1998-1999 academic year. Working closely with one of the two coaches assigned to the project, the principals were guided through a multi-step, reflective practice model designed to bring about reform at the individual school site under the direction of the respective principals.

The Division of Professional Development for the Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) annually recognizes one professional development program with

the Tom Vest Recognition Award for outstanding achievement in professional development. The purpose of the award is to recognize and promote the "best of the best," to showcase effective professional development that can be replicated, or adapted to, local schools and districts across the Commonwealth. The Foundation/NASSP program in JCPS received the prestigious award at the annual KASA conference held on July 12, 1999 at the Louisville Galt House East Hotel.

HISTORY OF THE CLARK FOUNDATION/NASSP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR JCPS PRINCIPALS

In 1997, NASSP was awarded a grant of $325,000 for 16 months to design and implement a one-year professional development program for middle school principals in JCPS. The challenge to NASSP was to design activities that focused on building the capacity of principals to support standards-based reform by increasing their knowledge of the standards implementation process and improving their instructional leadership, communication, reflective practice, and interpersonal skills.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND THE URBAN PRINCIPAL

Reflective thinking and acting has emerged as critical aspects of professional development for urban teachers and principals. For example, Brubacher, Case, and Reagan (1994) applied reflective thinking in their efforts to restructure the teacher education program at the University Connecticut. Their research disclosed the fact that, all too often, urban educators, when confronted with complex educational dilemmas, rely upon 'prepackaged' programs, techniques, and plans or merely rely upon their instincts and experience rather than employ structured megacognitve processes.

Ross and Bondy (1993) have demonstrated the application of reflective practice to enhance student empowerment as an essential aim of elementary education. They have shown in their research how teachers can draw upon reflective decision-making to help elementary-school children become caring, involved, and productive citizens.

Central to reflective practice for urban principals, however, is to move beyond a focus on the techniques of school administration to a focus on the critical purpose of school administration. This shift requires a principal to no longer think exclusively of management skills needed for effective decision-making, but to also consider the reasoning behind those decisions, and also their consequences. Reflective practice challenges urban principals to no longer think in terms of *how* (technical) to solve problems, but *why* (critical) when considering a particular solution, and *what* (interpretive) message that decision(s) sends to the school community (see Polite 1997; Schuttloffel 1999).

PHASE ONE 1997-1998: SHADOWING ENCOUNTERS

A semi-structured Shadowing Encounter Instrument and procedures were developed by Polite (1997) as a working tool and component of an on-going, multi-year professional development institute to be used with urban principals. The shadowing encounters were not fashioned totally within the genre of structured observation of school administrators established by Mintzberg, 1973 and others (see Dempsey 1976; Martin and Willower 1981; Kmetz and Willower, 1982; Willis, 1980). The shadowing served two important purposes for the professional development policies in JCPS: 1. It provided a method to identify individual principal's preferred work behaviors and trends; and 2. It aided in the establishment of a rapport between the principals and the professional development coach. The shadowing procedures were designed with the express purpose of facilitating technical and interpretive levels of reflection among the affected principals. Each principal was shadowed for two full days during the 1997-1998 school year. Each engaged in a feedback session, and an in-depth interview related to the shadowing encounters and summer 3-day retreat. In addition to being prepared to engage in a rigorous reflective practice activity during the 1998-1999 year, each principal was able to categorically answer two overarching questions at the close of Phase One: 1. What do I

tend to do with my time daily? and 2. What do my collective work behaviors mean with respect to instructional leadership for my school?

The social context of each school is also particularly challenging. Among the 19 principal participants, 5 are located in school communities generally considered particularly challenging, replete with the most negative elements of urban life. Each principal's school is considered 'urban'. Along gender lines, the principals are fairly well balanced with 11 men and 8 women. Each principal was paired with a coach, either Vernon C. Polite or Merylann J. Schuttloffel and there were no subsequent changes in the pairings throughout the program.

The data gleaned from the shadowing encounters were disaggregated so as to afford each principal an opportunity to discern routine daily behaviors across four elements that emerged as central to their duties in an urban middle school. The elements are 1) promoting students' cognitive development, 2) administration-management, 3) leadership behavior, and 4) attending to students' social behaviors.

[insert Table 1 about here]

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SHADOWING ENCOUNTERS

Typically, nothing depleted more of the principals' time than attending to students' social behaviors (advising, addressing discipline, and monitoring) as shown in Table 1, Category 4. Monitoring occurs, mainly, before school, during lunch, during the exchange of classes, and after school. Nearly 35% of what was seen during the shadowing encounters was some form of managing students' behaviors.

There are significant discrepancies in resources available across the schools. Much of this seems to depend upon the individual principal's ability to draw resources to the school and the resources available in the surrounding community. As a related issue, there emerged a need to conduct a race by gender analysis of the utilization of the various discipline options present within the district. Surely the district, like most urban districts that grapple with this dilemma, has considered these issues, but shadowing

revealed a salient relationship between these factors and students' academic achievement.

Extant research on the role of urban principals has confirmed the 'fragmented' nature of the principal's work. The shadowing encounters disclosed the fact that several factors contributed to the degree of work fragmentation: 1. Rapport with the administrative staff, 2. Relationship between the principal and the secretary, 3. Experience in the job, and 4. The principal's personal organizational skills.

The technologies available to students and teachers vary significantly from school to school. The principals' use of personal technologies ranges from 0 to10 (10 being the highest). Some principals have established meaningful formal and informal partnerships that seemingly have positive impacts on the participating school. The 'how-to' of the partnership process does not seem to be shared across schools.

It appeared that certain principals were emerging as effective "CEO's" (a new concept). They have established relationships with teachers and staffs that afford them the opportunities to meet regularly with groups of teachers and staff for the purpose of generating strategies and monitoring activities much like a manager in the macro domain. They hold their teachers and staff responsible for their work behaviors not unlike professionals in the corporate world, where the emphasis is on client services and satisfaction. This is different from the focus on one-on-one relationships and micro-management methods of the instructional leader.

Some principals are rather successful in their efforts to involve parents from low-income households and communities. Their successes should be shared across schools.

Tracking continues in a variety of ways across the districts and within individual schools. The persistence of tracking emerged as a troubling finding given the extant research on the negative outcomes of tracking on minorities and girls. This remains an issue of social class and access to these programs (are poor children equally involved in these programs?). The role(s) played by the middle school principals in the establishment

and maintenance of these tracking programs and monitoring access to these programs is most interesting.

Some principals have developed and shared their 'visions' of improved schooling with teachers and other relevant persons in their communities. They have amazing outcomes.

Phase One of the reflective practice professional development program involved one-on-one interactions between the principals and their respective coaches. The outcomes were insightful, disclosing patterns of work behavior previously identified by established researchers, but the shadowing encounters serve as wonderful opportunities to establish the working rapport between the coach the principals needed to carryout the "Phase Two: Individuals Reflective Practice Experiences" discussed below.

PHASE TWO 1998-1999: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXPERIENCES.

During the 1998-1999 school year, the 19 principals from JCPS were asked to engaged in a reflective thinking project based on the work of Ellis, 1994; Polite, 1997; Schon, 1989; and Schuttloffel, 1999. Each principal was asked to consider one administrative or leadership practice that would serve as a "target" for reflective thinking and positive change during the 1998-1999 academic year. The principals were told to consider from the following possibilities, but were not restricted to only these possibilities: Administrative team; monitoring students' behavior and discipline; community partnerships; use of technology to enhance administrative practice; or delegation of administrative responsibilities. In most cases, the target practice emerged as salient based on the knowledge gleaned from the shadowing encounters.

The reflective thinking projects were multi-step projects and involved on-going and incremental interactions and decision-making with the support the affected coaches, teachers, staff, parents or students. The ordered steps involved were the following. "Visioning—Critical Reflection (desired outcome)" was the first step in the process. Principals were asked to spend time considering what should be occurring with the target

practice selected and to consider the ideal outcomes and persons who will support the planned activities. They were admonished that this first step would take some structured reflection and reflective conversations with their respective coach if done correctly and would likely include perspectives and insights from their administrative team, teachers, parents, and possibly other support staff. "Reflection for Action (consider the current state)" was the second step in the process. At this point, the principal considered what is happening at his/her school with respect to the target practice *prior* to any interventions. The principal would, at this point, write a detailed description of the "here and now" to be used as a benchmark to measure change. "Technical Reflection" (how will you cause change?) was the next step in the reflective process. At this step in the process, the principals were ready to begin designing and implementing a plan of action to bring about change. Each principal stated clearly exactly what steps were to be put in place to bring about the desired outcome(s). Each principal also reported to the coach the names and roles of those persons who would be involved in the change process and what resources were required to impact the change? The Foundation/NASSP provided many of the resources.

"Interpretive reflections" (what are the implications of the change(s)) was an essential step in the process. After the plan was implemented, the implications of change emerged. An understanding the implications of change were critical to the process. Additionally, determining what data or evidence would be needed to document the change was probably the most difficult step in the process for many of the principals. Beyond "feeling" good about the change, what specific evidence would the principal gather to verify that there was an actual change in the target practice? Data collection is an area that emerged as new and difficult for urban principals. Finally, a list of the persons who assisted the effort was generated.

Finally, the principals were asked to indicate what other individuals were involved, what roles they played, and how were they brought into the process. The principals learned from this step to draw upon resources that are readily available but rare utilized. These persons were likely teachers within their building or central office personnel.

The 1998-1999 Reflective Practice Outcomes

Although each principal generated a totally unique reflective practice during the 1998-1999 school year that was tailored specially to conditions in his/her school building (see Table 2), the projects, liberally, could be grouped into four general categories or foci: 1. Focus on Assessing Student Work; 2. Focus on the Achievement Gap; 3. Focus on Technology; and 4. Focus on Basic Skills Acquisition. Four of the 19 reflective practice project summaries generated by the principals are presented follow below.

[insert Table 2 about here]

1. Focus on Assessing Student Work.

The Conway Middle School became an unofficial showplace during the 1998-1999 school based on the effort of Steve St. Clair to focus on identifying and displaying quality student work. St. Clair and his teachers spent a tremendous amount of energy considering possible ways of getting teachers and parents involved in the educational processes at Conway. In addition to the ongoing focus at professional development days, St. Clair wanted his teachers, students, and parents to become thoroughly familiar with the work generated by students and felt that the average parent could be empowered by training and support to score student work using appropriate rubrics. Teachers were trained and asked to display high quality students' work within their classroom. Teachers were allowed to 'walk through' the building during professional days to see high quality student work displayed. Educators from school districts around that country arrived at Conway during the 1998-1999 school year to see the massive examples of high quality student work and the scoring rubrics used for assessment.

Rubrics refer to a specific procedures used in assessing the quality of students' work as measured by objective standards (Popham 1997; Shepardson and Vicki 1997; Luft 1997). Rubrics are used widely across the nation and are now central components of state-sponsored assessments. For example, the state of Colorado has used rubrics to score portfolios that document the information literacy performance of students (see Callison 1997). According to Gramann and Aram's (1996) research, rubrics focus on the processes of recording data, analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and providing evidence. Albeit educators generally support the use of rubrics for the scoring of oral presentations, science projects and even some mathematics projects, rubrics are not without controversy. Many educators argue that rubrics tend to be too task-specific, general, lengthy, or confusing (Popham, 1997).

St. Clair decided to focus on assessing student work for his reflective practice project for the year. Specifically he wanted to increase the number of parents who were knowledgeable and proficient in the use of rubrics for scoring students'. His vision statement is particularly detailed and goal-driven.

A core group of parents will volunteer to be trained by the teaching staff to score student work. After being trained, the parents will join their child's teachers to score actual open-response scrimmage questions. The desired outcome would be that parents would come away from the activity with a deeper understanding of what students must know and be able to demonstrate when answering open-response questions. Consequently, parents will reinforce and support the school's efforts with their child. To accomplish these goals, there is a need to involve the science department chairperson, science teachers, parent trainer, PTSA Board, the professional development chairperson, cafeteria staff, the computer teacher, and team teachers.

When reflecting upon the current state of parent involvement at Conway, St. Clair concluded that there is a small core of parents who are involved in school's activities. Poor or limited parent involvement is not uncommon among urban schools. St. Clair

thought that the Conway parents have limited knowledge of performance standards and quality student work. The teachers work hard, posting student work and identifying quality student work, but they shoulder the load and felt a lack of support on the part of the parents.

The Conway plan of action included the following steps:

1. We will invite parents to score student work during a professional development day by way of the school's newsletter;
2. Each team will personally invite at least ten parents;
3. The science department will select an open-response question;
4. The science department chairperson and the parent trainer will meet to prepare training materials;
5. The office support staff will make calls to confirms parents' attendance;
6. The principal will meet with the professional development chairperson to prepare a "Parent Responsibilities," rubric for the purpose of training parents regarding rubrics.
7. All students will be given the selected science question to answer on a given day;
8. On a professional development day, the parents will be trained and subsequently paired with their child's team teachers to score the student's responses.

2. Focus on Eliminating the Achievement Gap.

The thrust of Principal Ann Goins' reflective practice activities were to compel teachers and parents to critically reflect upon the nexus between the Carrither Middle School's continued status as a prominent school in the district and the education of African American and poor students. Goins reflective vision statement supports her intentions:

Faculty and staff [at Carrithers] will look at the poor student who is usually low achieving, minority, and/or male with the same expectations for success as for all students. The adult's eye will see beyond that face. The low achievers will experience

success because they will be taught with strategies that will motivate and make them desire to do better, academically. All students will perform at a higher level and inappropriate behaviors will decrease.

This focus on eliminating the achievement gap between the ethnic poor and White students is consistent with the national trends in urban education (see Miller 1995; Brown 1999; Polite and Davis, 1999). In fact the national focus can be traced to 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its, "A Nation At risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." The purpose of that nationally celebrated report was to articulate, in the simplest possible terms, the problems besetting urban education and to render specific solutions.

Most recently, Miller (1995) provided evidence to support the continued need to improve schooling in urban America because of the high concentration of minority students dwelling in urban enclaves. If these educational attainment gaps persist, the overall standard of living in the U.S. will be lower. Miller's work acknowledges the overall progress made by minorities, especially during the second half of the century, but argues that much is yet to be achieved. This can be verified in school communities like Carrithers. He informs us that the educational advancement realized by ethnic and minority group has not matched their growth in numbers. For example, Miller states that 3 out of every 10 students are minorities, and the minority numbers are increasing rapidly.

When reflecting upon the situation at Carrithers with her coach, Goins asserted that there is a poignant relationship between poverty and academic achievement at Carrithers. When considering the appropriate actions needed to turn around the achievement of poor and minority students, Goins stated, "according the 1997-1998 state performance report, there is a major difference between Carrither's white and African American students in the critical areas of writing, mathematics, and reading." She concluded that "from a study of the performance data, it appears that some teachers vary instructional strategies to

accommodate all students, but we need more teachers to learn how best to serve all students."

According to Polite and Davis' (1999) research, the longer students are in poverty, the greater the likelihood they will not achieve at expected and appropriate levels in schools. The present realities at Carrithers are that African American students, especially the male population, are more likely to experience long-term poverty than whites, with increased mobility and health problems contributing significantly to their performance in school. Miller's (1995) research suggests that young White adults generally possess a broad range of skills and knowledge acquired mostly from school, skills needed to function in society, but often African American and Latinos are less prepared to work in a technology-driven society. This is, as Miller reasons, directly related to the amount of family resources and opportunities that have historically been available to these groups.

In an effort to begin enhancing awareness and eliminating the achievement gap issue at Carrithers, Goins undertook a personal research effort that involved reading important works related to the national issue, and she shared her insights with Carrither's teachers at planned professional development workshops. The works were Miller's "An American Imperative: Accelerating Minority Educational Advancement" (1995); Kunjufu's "Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys"; and Polite's (1999) "A Cup that Runneth over: Personal Reflections on the Black Male Experience."

Goins' plan of action called for a pilot project, mobilizing concerned African American men in the business community to serve as mentors and tutors for the low achieving African American males. She relied on affected students' questionnaires about the efficacy of the services provided and written comments from the mentors that will guide the future of the pilot efforts. The school's Consolidated Plan Committee also spent a considerable amount of time focused on the school wide achievement gap issue. Goins has agreed to continue spearheading the effort to eliminate the achievement gap and realizes that her role as principal is central to ameliorating the differences between African

American poor students and whites. This reflective project was off to a remarkable start during the 1998-1999 school-year and will continue with school wide emphases during the 1999-2000 school year.

3. Focus on Technology.

Newburg Middle School opened its new facility in 1997. In its second year of operation, Betty Graham was appointed the principal of the technology-rich facility. The new structure, located within the same community as the old, is a state-of-the-art technology center within JCPS.

Graham, like many administrators across the country, was grappling with decisions about how to use the new technology-rich facility and the issue of public accountability. When Graham engaged in the "reflection for action" with her coach for the project, she and the coach dealt with the following facts: In addition to a new building and furniture, new technologies were included in the building. The technology has out-paced the staff's knowledge. Many of the teachers do not use technology when delivering instruction. The use of technology to communicate is also limited. The area of technology is vital to the success of Newburg Middle because it is the district's magnet school for mathematics, science, and technology. The school has been furnished with the following technology: 1 computer laboratory with 31 computers with access to the Internet; 2. an "Option 2000" classroom with 16 computers used to explore technology-oriented careers; 3. A media studio with technologies needed to produce daily in-house schools news broadcasts; 4. Each classroom is equipped with at least two networked computers, a VCR, and a telephone; and 5. the administrative offices are equipped with networked computers.

Crouse (1997) and Kaufman (1997) remind us that school administrators are commonly forced to make technology-related decisions annually, hoping that they are spending the public's money wisely and the new systems put in place will actually benefit their students. Much depends on the vision and expertise of the principal. Often the principals and others are responsible for establishing the "vision" for technology usage for

his/her school and providing ongoing support (see Meltzer and Sherman 1997). Central to the technology issue is establishing a technology infrastructure, specific to the individual school building and the networking of technologies throughout the building to local and national systems (see Gilgi 1997). It is also clear that precious little attention is placed on staff development nationally while all too often much of the attention is placed on technology acquisition (Benson 1997). In the case of Graham and Newburg, the district has placed a significant amount of technology in the school, much more than the other middle schools in JCPS. Ms Graham felt a real responsibility to increase accountability and output and to realize these outcomes she worked on creating a technology plan for Newburg Middle School as her reflective practice project for the 1998-1997.

Working collaboratively with her professional development coach and administrative team, Graham engaged in technical reflection in which a technology plan was designed for Newburg Middle School. Included within the comprehensive plan was the principal's continued use of a mobile technology office. Graham utilized a mobile desk that was complete with two-way radio that allowed her to be in constant contact with the school secretary, a computer and printer. She was able to move from room to room to observe instruction daily, spending much of her workday productively, in the classroom. This one factor had a tremendous effect on the teachers and students. Graham's presence in the classrooms for significant portions of each day compelled teachers to think of Graham as an instructional leader rather than the building manager.

Graham's plan for several professional development workshops for teachers focused on the use of technology to enhance instruction. These workshops were strategically planned to occur throughout the school year with follow-up activities in the use of technology to enhance instruction.

As many teachers were reluctant to use computers, The Graham/Newburg Plan called for a decrease in printed correspondence from the principal and an increase in

computer-generated correspondence, forcing teachers and staff to rely more on technology. In short, Graham and other administrators decided to avoid (or at least limit) providing the normal newsletters, bulletins, etc. in print forms. Teachers and staff were forced to access the communication software to be informed of in-school activities. Graham insisted upon a "return receipt" in-house communication software package that allowed her to monitor which teachers were actually reading her correspondences.

Additionally, Graham's plan required all teachers and staff to participate in a technology skills assessment where the outcomes were used shape the professional development workshops that occurred during the school year. The Newburg Plan called for additional software purchases that included an electronic grading system and Microsoft Office for all teachers. Finally, Graham was instrumental in establishing a Technology Committee that included teachers, staff and parents. The Technology Committee was charged with the responsibility of developing a "Newburg Technology Proficiency Checklist" and oversight of the technology budget.

In documentation of the changes that occurred at Newburg in the area of technology, diverse sources of data were generated. The data collected included technology participation rosters, teacher growth plans, work samples, and the evaluation of the implementation of technology activities in the school's Consolidated Plan.

The issues related to technology in middle schools are multi-faceted and challenging. The work that occurred at Newburg, based on the reflective practice model, resulted in all teachers utilizing technologies, increased and diverse kinds of technologies available to teachers, and increased proficiency in the area of technology for middle school students.

4. Focus on Basic Skills Acquisition

Determined to change the course of his school away from controlling student behavior to a focus on academics, a principal decided that his reflective practice project for the 1998-1999 school year would be on improving the reading skills of the adolescents assigned to his school. Butch Martin is the principal of the Alex R. Kennedy Metropolitan

Middle School, a nationally recognized alternative school program. Kennedy Middle specializes in working with middle school students who are considered violent, incorrigible, and chronic truant adolescents. The students are referred to the Kennedy School by the principal of their regular school, Pupil Personnel Department, the juvenile courts and state agencies. The most common reasons for placement at Kennedy are school disruption, incorrigible behaviors, and violent and aggressive behaviors. Major factors that appear common across many of the students at Kennedy are low-income family status and poor reading and basic skills.

It is the school's philosophy that all students can learn through small class size, a cohesive staff, and a structured learning environment. The Jefferson County School System, in its commitment to the success of the Kennedy School, allowed the principal special permission to hand-select the school's teachers and staff for two academic years without following the teachers' union requirements. In exchange for the right to select his teachers, Martin agreed to take the worst behaved students from any of the middle schools in the county. In 1995, the school opened in a completely renovated building, located in a middle-income neighborhood in Louisville. The school's staff strives to help their students through varied methods, (using role modeling and varied learning techniques) to better understand that they must take responsibility for themselves both in their ability to interact socially in their mainstream school and in their abilities to achieve academic success. Once these skills are part of the students' foundational core, they are returned to their mainstream schools where hopefully they can meet with social and academic success.

The consequential research on high-risk students argues that poor reading and other academic skills are strong indicators associated with incorrigible and violent youth. The Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency produced a document titled "Facts You Can Use: Seeds of Help" (1997) which suggested that the escalation of youth violence is one of the major public health concerns of the United States. The

agency stressed the decline in reading achievement as a major factor linked to adolescent violence. Likewise Pungello (1997) examined the long-term effects of family income and life events on math and reading achievement of 1,253 children and found that low income and minority status are significant risk factors for students' achievement.

When reflecting upon the current state of reading achievement, Martin wrote:

> Before we started the program the data looked very dismal in terms of our students reading scores. The average students being sent to us [Kennedy] at the alternative school were reading 2 to 4 years below grade level. Some students were non-readers. The problem was compounded by the teaching staff's lack of proficiency in reading instruction. Less than 25% of our teachers feel comfortable in using reading strategies. Many of our teachers have not thought about reading instruction in 10 to 15 years.

The technical reflection plans that were put in place were simple and straightforward. Martin gathered and shared the students' reading data with the staff early in the fall of the school year. He subsequently interviewed each teacher regarding his/her reading strategies and instruction employed in the classroom. The initial data suggested that there were two groups of teachers in the buildings: those who grasped and used reading strategies regularly and those who did not. Martin and a group of teachers attended an extensive training program provided by JCPS. Following the training, Martin and the trained teachers began providing professional development workshops for teachers in the various departments at Kennedy.

> Reading at Kennedy Metro has become the main focus of the school. Every teacher in each content area is focused on reading. Department meetings have become reflective seminars on what strategies worked and which ones did not. All the scattered resources have been put together (Accelerated Reader, Success Maker Laboratory, and reading tutors). Interdisciplinary teams are now sponsoring activities that require students to practice their reading skills in the

content areas. The evidence that the reflective practice strategies were effective at Kennedy is impressive. Teachers have documented a change in attitudes towards reading on the part of their students. Surprisingly, the teachers also reported that students really were excited by their improved reading skills, debunking the myth the learning was not important to these students. Students reported that books and other printed materials seemed, 'friendlier' and easier to handle. The exit test scores, compiled by the reading teacher, demonstrated an average gain in reading at 1.5 grade level increase in less than 5 months. Some students gained as much as 2 to 3 years in reading.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has provided resources and substantial financial support to JCPS over a 9-year period beginning with the 1991-1992 academic year. The Program for Student Achievement currently concentrates its resources on four urban school systems that are working to increase the academic performance of middle school students. Over the past three years, the Foundation supported efforts in six school districts to develop and implement academic standards for what middle school students should know and be able to do in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Each district set a goal for the percentage of eighth graders who will meet the standards in the year 2001. The Foundation will continue working with four of the six school districts in the next several years. Those four districts are: Corpus Christi, Texas; Long Beach, California; Louisville, Kentucky; and San Diego, California. The Program does not support middle school reform projects in other cities.

The Program's current grant making falls into the following categories:

- Direct grants to the four school districts to promote district-wide reform shaped around the implementation of academic standards;

- Support for local and national organizations that help the four districts work on improving staff development practices, designing curricula that enables students to learn more effectively and achieve at higher levels, and training teachers on how to assess student work.
- Grants to organizations that work with the four districts on campaigns to increase parent and community understanding of and support for the school districts.

KEY FIGURES

The reflective practice activities in JCPS came about as a result of a dynamic partnership between the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Student Achievement (New York, NY), the Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY), and the National Association of Secondary Principals (Reston, VA). Since 1987, Hayes Mizell has been Director of the Program for Disadvantaged Students and later the Program for Student Achievement (a program name change) at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, one of the nation's fifty largest foundations. Mizell is responsible for the Foundation's initiative to support middle school reforms that will enable all students to meet high academic standards by the end of the eighth grade. For excerpts from Mizell's speeches, search http://www.middleweb.com/HMreader.html.

JCPS is one of several school systems supported by the Foundation. The key figures at the JCPS are Stephen W. Daeschner, Superintendent; Sandy Ledford, Assistance Superintendent for District-wide Instructional Services; and Cheryl DeMarsh, Director of the Clark Grant.

Central to the coordination of the professional development activities at NASSP were Sue Galletti and Gwendolyn Cooke. Galletti is NASSP's Associate Executive Director, and Director of Middle Level Services. She provides leadership for NASSP products and services, publications, conferences, the convention, and staff development opportunities targeted to middle level leaders. Gwendolyn J. Cooke, is Director of NASSP's Urban Services Office. Cooke directs NASSP's Annual Leadership Academy.

Two consultants were responsible for designing the shadowing and reflective practice activities and also served as the coaches to the 19 JCPS principals: Vernon C. Polite and Merylann Schuttloffel. Polite is an associate professor in the Department of Education, at the Catholic University of America (Washington, DC). He specializes in research focused on organizational change, urban school leadership, minority issues, and qualitative research methods. He has provided professional development workshops for middle school principals affiliated with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's programs for the past eight years. Schuttloffel is an assistant professor also at the Catholic University of America's Department of Education where she teaches course in educational administration.

SUMMARY

This article has demonstrated the value of shadowing encounters and reflective practice exercises as tools to facilitate technical, interpretive, and critical levels of reflection among urban principals. Based upon their comments, too many to showcase within the context of this article, the principals, unanimously attested, to the benefits gleaned from the reflective practices.

The coaches learned much, through the processes, about the complex roles of urban principals. One of the major lessons learned is the obvious discontinuity between the principals' formal preparation and the duties and activities of their daily jobs. Perhaps advanced training in anthropology, psychology, sociology, social work or even law would be far better aligned with what many principals actually do in urban schools.

The reality is that many urban principals must rely, to a great extent, on task-specific "on-the-job training," for their most effective professional development. To this end, the shadowing encounter and reflective practice activities are effective methods to quickly identify strengths and weaknesses.

Raw data from the job shadowing encounters and reflective practice activities has also afforded many of the urban principals the opportunity to recognize their fairly

sophisticated and unique competencies in instructional leadership, social control, business partnership, school and community relations, etc. The irony is that many of the principals were either unaware of these wonderful skills until they saw themselves in action on a typical day or had no vehicle for sharing what they do with others.

Certain aspects of the professional development work reported here supports the technical findings of previous studies of administrative work behavior (Mintzberg 1973; Kmetz and Willower 1982; Martin and Willower 1981) highlighting the routine of principals' work including the fragmentation, multiplicity of tasks performed with fairly narrow time constraints, etc. The most important function of the work, however, was to aid in identifying trends of work behaviors.

Each veteran principal produced a unique reflective practice project that represented on-going work and attention throughout the school year and also on-going collaboration with their coach. The principals established wonderful working rapport with their coaches during the first year one of the project when they were shadowed. A critical component of reflective thinking and action for urban principals is the ongoing contact and visits from the coach. The principals agreed that without such contact, it likely the completion of the reflective practice project would have been doubtful due to competing factors.

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Table 1

Shadowing Encounters: Observed Principal Behaviors during Phase One Reported in Minutes and Percentages[1]

Cognitive Development	**Administration/ Management**	**Leadership Behaviors**	**Social Behaviors**
Effectiveness	Personnel Issues	Critical Friend	Advising Students
2,112	2,214	509	3,171
Curriculum	Attendance	Learning	Disruption
748	1,232	3,373	852
Teaching	Desk Work	Prof. Develop.	Violence
924	2,105	232	164
Tech. Issues	Budget Issues	Community Issues	Weapons Issues
344	356	1,342	12
Testing Issues			Gang Issues
522			45
			Monitoring
			3,944
4,650	5,907	5456	8,188
19%	24%	23%	34%

[1]Reported in total minutes observed by category and by percentage.

Table 2

School-Based Reflective Practice Projects: 1998-1999

Principal	Middle School	Project
Baker, Debbie	Meyzeek	Create a teacher evaluation process that results in greater student achievement
Calvert, Jan	Farnsley	Establish a mentoring program for all new teachers
Clemons, Skip	Southern	Improve students' reading skills and CATS scores
Cole, Albert	Crosby	Closing the achievement gap
Crutcher, Ronald	Noe	Focus on student work
Frepartner, Susan	Knight	Focus on instructional practices as they relate to performance standards
Gaebler, Thomas	Moore	Communication: Staff and community
Goins, Ann	Carrithers	Close the achievement gap between Black and White students
Graham, Betty	Newburg	Use of technology to enhance administrative practice
Hardin, Mary	T. Jefferson	Restructure the administrative team
Hite, Dean	Western	Focus on instructional management
Martin, Butch	Kennedy	School-wide focus on reading in the content area
Nolan, Holly	Highland	Recruit more business partnerships
Peak, Kevin	Frost	Focus on effective classroom management to improve the learning environment

Rose, Mark	Iroquois	Use of technology for administrative functions and promote staff proficiency in their use of technology
St. Clair, Steve	Conway	Prepare teams of parents to assess students' work
Watts, Stuart	Barret	Improved communication for the implementation and modification of the Consolidated Plan
Wosoba, Jonathan	Westport	School-wide curricula Modification
Zachery, Robert	Jefferson County	Modification of the math curriculum